

## RIVER FLOODS COMPARED

That of the Year 1881 Still Holds the High Water Record.

## SCENES AND INCIDENTS NOW RECALLED

Missouri River in that Year Charged its Course, Does Great Damage and Forms Cut Off and Manawa Lakes.

While the recent overflow of the Missouri river at this point caused considerable damage and some little inconvenience and suffering, it was nothing compared to the disastrous rampage of the river in 1881. It is claimed by some few persons that there was more water in the river last week than in 1881, when the channel was filled with ice that gorged above the city, but this claim is not borne out by the facts.

In 1881 the river reached a maximum height of twenty-three feet and eight inches above low water mark, while the highest point registered last week was eighteen feet six inches, or just six inches above the danger line. The damage done by the present flood is insignificant when compared with that of 1881. At no time has the water reached such a height as it did in 1881, although old settlers claim that the flood of 1867 was very disastrous. It is also urged that the flood of 1844 exceeded that of 1881, but this is considered a myth. In 1844 the river is said to have reached a height of thirty-eight feet above low water mark. The river bed was said to be seventeen feet lower in 1881 than before the '60s, so that a rise of twenty-three feet eight inches would have meant a rise of forty feet eight inches. The late flood compared with the flood of 1844 was almost on a par, because when allowances are made for the change in the bed of the stream, the recent rise indicated a rise of thirty-five feet six inches, without estimating any alteration in the channel, or increase in the height of the banks since 1881.

## The Big Flood.

The river commenced to rise in the north on March 26, 1881. The weather in the vicinity of Fort Benton and other Dakota points continued very warm for several days, the temperature of Fort Benton reaching 70 degrees. Warm winds swept up the river and on March 27 the ice three feet in depth broke. In a few hours the river rose ten feet, flooding the country, driving people from their homes, drowning their stock and devastating their farms. The rise was noticeable at Omaha March 27, when the river rose to seventeen feet nine inches. It dropped several feet the next day to gather courage for the next onslaught and on the 31st it rose from eleven feet four inches to fourteen feet above low water mark.

Vacillating as a weather vane for the next few days, leaving settlers hopeful that their predictions would prove unfounded, as the overflow from the Yellowstone freshet had already occurred, the turbid stream opened the month with a fresh rise that promised destruction to everything within its reach. On April 3 it reached a height of twenty-two feet. It broke between the Union Pacific shops and the Omaha Smelter, flooding the intervening district. The shops were cut off and the smelter was closed down. Lumber men in the vicinity of the river built booms for the protection of their yards, and prayed for mercy from the treacherous current. The ice gorge, seventy-five miles long and averaging an expanse of rushing water over three miles wide, immense blocks of ice ground together on their way down the stream to lodge finally against the island below the bridge, where they found temporary rest in their turbulent course. Three thousand people stood on the river banks to assist the railway employees and lumber men in the salvage of property. On April 9 the ice tore down the fence around the smelter. Lame in the lime house slaked as soon as it became damp and fired the building. Flames rising out of a sea of water added dismay to the discouraged workers. The crowd watched three men overturn in a boat. Two were swept to death between the grinding blocks of ice, while the third was rescued.

During these days boats were torn to pieces, the cable across the river snapped, the ferry masts as if they were toothpicks. The transfer hotel at Council Bluffs was under water, and its occupants were compelled to seek a more habitable abode. Eight hundred passengers westward bound were delayed in the Iowa city or were robbed by a boatman who charged them \$5 or \$10 to ferry them to Omaha. Freight was blocked in Council Bluffs, and there were 550 cars stored on the tracks outside the watered section awaiting transportation across the river to the west. The boats of Omaha were packed with passengers, travelers who found the river the central topic and sight for days. It was a season of uncertainty, as no one knew what would be the outcome, nor could any one offer a sensible guess. Rumors of the wildest character concerning the change of

the river's channel, the death of thousands of head of stock and scores of people, together with the destruction of a great amount of property agitated the public and kept its mind at a fever heat.

## Strange and Interesting Sight.

Spectators on the river banks were treated to strange and impressive sights, and queer experiences came to a great many. Excavator Porter, rigged his richly-laden ferryboat with mast and sail and for several days handled the mails, at the same time transferring a large number of passengers by their baggage at exorbitant prices. It is estimated that he cleared \$4,000 during that brief time. It is said that one man was compelled to offer \$1,000 before he could induce anyone to attempt to remove his aged parents and brother from the top of a house which threatened to go to pieces between great cakes of ice at any moment. One person took a trip up the river and met a man who had been here for the hour of his boat for an hour until he could save his wife, who was encompassed by water and ice near Florence.

Trunks of trees stripped of limbs, scarred and battered as if they had held a fort in time of siege, swept down the current. The bells of a church came down the stream, its bell tolling constantly, as if ringing the death knell of unfortunates, or sounding a far-reaching warning to the settlers to take to the hills before it was too late. The raging river had no respect for anything, tearing coffins from their resting places in cemeteries and sending them seaward at a pace that caused cold chills to play hide and seek up and down one's spinal column.

When the flood was at its height the extraordinary spectacle was presented of a big stern-wheel steamerboat, on its way from St. Louis to Fort Benton, coaling at the Union Pacific shops. The boat left the channel just north of the smelter, worked and steamed north and west to Seventh, between Davenport and Chicago streets. At the south end of the Union Pacific shop yards was a huge pile of coal on a platform, and from this the steamer drew its supply, and then pulled out to the open river.

When the flood was at its height a Bee reporter, accompanied by a friend, engaged a boat and proceeded on a tour of investigation. Rowing to the Iowa side and pulling into the heart of Council Bluffs, the old Metropolitan hotel was approached. The hotel was located but a little distance west of the Pacific house, and it was there that the landing was made. On the way there several women were seen in the second story windows of a house near the Northwestern depot, and the gallant reporter, thinking they might be in distress, rowed to the house and offered his assistance to carry them to dry land. The rivalry between the two cities, which were at that time more the same size than today, was so great that, learning he was from Omaha, one of the women remarked: "Well, you can just go back to Omaha, where you belong. We don't want your help. You attend to your business, and we'll take care of our own affairs."

The water continued to rise until April 9, when it reached its maximum height, twenty-three feet eight inches above low water mark. Messages announcing the submergence of the water at Sioux City were received with joy by the weary workmen along the river banks. All danger was passed by April 11, and business was soon after resumed in the railroad shops and in the smelter.

Elk Point, S. D., was a favorite place for river folk to winter in, and tie up their boats until the ice was out of the stream. In April of 1881 several steamboats were tied up at the wharf. One of them broke away when the river went up and drifted out on the prairie. When the waters receded the steamer was left high and dry, three miles from the river, and the entire summer was spent by its captain getting it back. Skids were built under it, and after much labor and patience the boat had its second launching.

At Council Bluffs the river rose so suddenly one night that the inhabitants were greatly alarmed. Fire bells were rung, fish horns were blown and whistles sounded their shrill warning to the citizens to awaken and assist in saving the unfortunate who were living too near the river for safety. The night was terrifying to persons of tender nerves, and many will never forget it. The stock yards were flooded after the stock had been removed, and water ran through the district at the tops of the fences.

## River Changes Course.

During this trying time the channel of the river changed to the course it now pursues, previous to the time when it was cut off it was the old river bed. When the waters were receding a new channel was cut around what is now East Omaha, and sand bars forming at the south end of Cut off lake, soon the island was no longer an island. For years after 1881 the bottoms were covered with water and were gradually, but gradually the ground became more firm, and was settled by the squatters, who now inhabit that district. A portion of this new territory caused considerable litigation later between the two states, each contending for the title of the property. The district known as East Omaha was made inhabitable by this change, although to this day the occupants of the bottoms have been afraid the river would return to its old channel some time and they would be compelled to flee to the high land for safety, just as the earlier

settlers did. The recent flood drove many from their homes, but it was because Florence lake overflowed into Cut off lake, which is considerably lower. The latter lake filled and water spread over the contiguous lowland until it almost reached the river. Had Locust street broken and the embankment at Eleventh and Davenport given way, the water would have found an outlet and the river might have resumed its former course, which was more direct than that now pursued.

To the flood of 1881 may be attributed the change in the river which gave to the people of Iowa and Nebraska the waterways place known as Lake Manawa, which has developed into a favorite resort. It also made Courtland Beach a possibility, although in recent years this place has lost its popularity.

## DRUGGED A YOUNG WOMAN

Charge Against Leon Skirris and Louis Condas—The Latter Has Disappeared.

A charge of attempted assault, with the assistance of a drug, upon Carrie Darnold, 1915 Farnam street, has been made against Leon Skirris and Louis Condas, confederates at 30 North Sixteenth street. Skirris has been arrested, but Condas took time by the forelock and is said to have left the city.

Miss Darnold, who came here recently from Pueblo, Colo., was employed in the candy factory several weeks ago. She states that she found the attentions of the men distasteful on account of their familiarity and was forced to leave them. After being out of work about ten days the men sent for her again and she returned upon the promise not to annoy her. They were very good to her, but she could not stand them. Thursday they resumed their rude treatment. She insisted that they should stop and one of them told her she would have to give her a drug. She paid no attention to the remark, because she did not believe they could have the courage to do such a thing. Thursday afternoon while the men were eating their dinner Condas came in and offered her a cup of wine, which he said was fine, being imported from Greece. She refused, but he insisted so hard that she took a sip. A few seconds later she says she became ill and started toward the hydrant to get some water. Skirris interposed and offered her some more wine, which he said would take away the sickly feeling and make her better. She took a couple of swallows which went to her head immediately, robbing her of power to defend herself. For the next hour Condas and Skirris endeavored to carry out their proposition. Condas, however, had some other objections, relieving each other in the front room to watch for customers. She says friends came in and inquired for her, but were told she could not be seen. After a time the men released her and she went home.

Detectives who have been at work on the case claim to have learned that Skirris and Condas were arrested on a similar charge in St. Louis and say that they gave bond for their appearance and both skipped from St. Louis before time for trial.

County Commissioners Meet.

The absence of Commissioner Hector, who is confined to his bed by rheumatism, left the opposing elements in the Board of County Commissioners equally divided. Consequently nothing but necessary routine business was attempted at the meeting yesterday forenoon.

County Clerk C. A. Manville of Dodge county sent a communication in which he stated that the people of his county are anxious to have a railroad through the county. He stated that the route of the proposed road would be from the southeast corner of Dodge county to the Military road. The Dodge county commissioners have considered the proposition several times and have decided to order the improvement if the Douglas county board will construct that portion of the road that will lie in this county and pay one-half the cost of the bridge.

The matter was referred to the committee on roads for investigation.

The official appointment and bond of Joseph H. Hume as deputy sheriff to succeed Miles Mitchell, resigned, was submitted by Sheriff McDonald and approved. On petition of property owners H. P. Leland was appointed justice of the peace in West Omaha precinct.

## Crafting on a Small Scale.

A solicitor for a photographer, was arrested yesterday on the charge of obtaining money by false representation from customers of the gallery. The solicitor, whose name is Eastman, has been in the employ of Gerner for the last four years and Mr. Gerner gives him an excellent reputation during that time. He says that a few days ago he was called to the door of a man who had been in the employ of Gerner for the last four years and Mr. Gerner gives him an excellent reputation during that time. He says that a few days ago he was called to the door of a man who had been in the employ of Gerner for the last four years and Mr. Gerner gives him an excellent reputation during that time.

## Mortality Statistics.

The following births and deaths were reported to the health commissioner during the twenty-four hours ending at noon yesterday:

Births—M. V. Connor, 2920 Indiana avenue, boy; Joseph Fox, 1421 South Fourth, girl; Edward Wilson, 221 N. Lincoln, boy; John Fox, 1425 Military avenue, girl; Andrew Neve, 3526 Miami, boy; Carl Anderson, 3947 California, girl; William Kaufman, 2701 Leavenworth, boy; William T. Peck, 2217 Maple, girl.

Deaths—George L. Green, 2010 Davenport, 52 years, tuberculosis; Eliza J. Corey, 614 North Nineteenth, 45 years, old; Mrs. Mary F. Hastings, 35 years; Ellis Slater, 2204 North Thirteenth, 2 years, burns; William A. Skinner, 539 South Twenty-ninth avenue, 6 years, scarlet fever; John J. O'Connell, 1823 Leavenworth, 38 years, accidental shooting.

## Colonel Bailey to Be Retired.

Lieutenant Colonel T. J. Wint was relieved from duty on the retiring board called to meet in this city, and Lieutenant Colonel S. T. Towne was relieved. When the change was announced the board was newly constituted met at once, those present being Brigadier General H. C. Merriam, president; Colonel G. H. Rodney, Lieutenant Colonel E. A. Koepfer, Lieutenant Colonel A. S. Towne, Major G. K. Winne and Captain Grote Hutchison, judge advocate, as recorder. The retiring board was held in uniform. Colonel Clarence M. Bailey of the Sixteenth Infantry appeared before the board and after a full examination and inquiry into the facts a report was made recommending his retirement on account of physical disability.

## Troubles Were Too Great.

St. Louis, April 28.—A special to the Post-Dispatch from St. Louis, Mo., says: A. N. Miller, vice president of the National Bank in the bank that recently failed here, committed suicide today by shooting himself twice in the head. He was a resident of the bank failed suits against Miller aggregating \$60,000 and this is supposed to have been the reason for his self-murder. The deceased left a wife and six children \$60,000 of paid up insurance. Mrs. Miller is crazed as a result of her husband's action.

## Millions in Matches.

TRENTON, N. J., April 29.—Articles of incorporation for a match company, with an authorized capital of \$1,000,000, were filed with the secretary of state today. One-half of the capital stock is preferred, with 1 per cent dividend. The incorporators are: E. H. Bronson, J. C. Crandall, W. E. Cook, William M. Irvine, C. H. Williams and C. G. Diddler.

## SURVEYING A PACIFIC ROAD

S. S. Curtis Recounts His Experience of Forty-Six Years Ago.

## OMAHA BEYOND BOUNDS OF CIVILIZATION

Eastern Iowa and Western Nebraska Inhabited Principally by the Warlike Bands of Sioux and Ojib Indians.

Probably there is no man in Omaha who has a greater fund of information relative to the early settlement of eastern Nebraska and western Iowa than S. S. Curtis, who has resided here for nearly half a century. During his long residence in Omaha Mr. Curtis has been prominent in the development of the city and has watched it grow from a mere Indian trading station to its present metropolitan proportions. At the present time Mr. Curtis is special master in chancery, and while he is away from the city he invariably has time to recount even the most unimportant details of the early history of the west. The other day, in speaking of his first visit to this section of the country, he said:

"In the summer of 1853 my father was chief engineer of a projected railroad from Fort Wayne, Ind., to Council Bluffs, Ia., or as it was generally known at that time, Kanerville. Small sections of this road had been built in Illinois and Indiana, but as the reads from Burlington and Davenport to Council Bluffs succeeded in getting land grants from congress the following winter, it was impossible to proceed with what was known as the Air Line and which the projectors hoped to make in time a part of a continuous line to the Pacific coast, by way of the Platte valley and South Pass, of which route my father was looked upon as the leading champion in the west in the discussions concerning the route. My father, being so recognized by congress in being made chairman of the committee on the Pacific railroads on his entrance into that body in 1857, and holding the position until the passage by the house of the first railroad bill, however, enough money had been raised in Illinois and Indiana to pay for a preliminary survey from New Boston, where the proposed road was to cross the Mississippi river to Kanerville."

"A few days after school closed I was told I could proceed to New Boston and join the surveying party and take the hind end of the chain. I being at the time 15 years of age. On reaching New Boston I learned that the party had already started. After a day's search, however, I found the surveyors in the bottom lands of the Iowa and Mississippi rivers in heavy timber, with heat and mosquitoes. After passing Wapello, however, the work was mostly on the prairie and very pleasant. At Washington, Ia., my father joined the party and concluded to bring us through to Kanerville and make the survey from there east. We had two tents, with ten or twelve persons in the party, and in addition of our land and wagon team enabled us to move about twenty-five miles a day, or substantially, from one county seat to the next. We aimed to reach the town by 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and while some of us were making camp father and Mr. Gates, the engineer in charge of the party, were stirring up the people to attend a railroad meeting, usually at the court house. Meetings were held at Washington, Oskaloosa, Knoxville, Indianola and Winterset. Mr. Gates talked mostly of the proposed road through Iowa, and my father showed the advantages of the great bluffs to the north of them. The projectors erected earthen-roofed log cabins for the winter, giving the place the name of Winter Quarter. But they were on Indian ground and the government compelled them to withdraw to the east side of the river, and as the projectors of the party were stirring up the people to attend a railroad meeting, usually at the court house. Meetings were held at Washington, Oskaloosa, Knoxville, Indianola and Winterset. 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